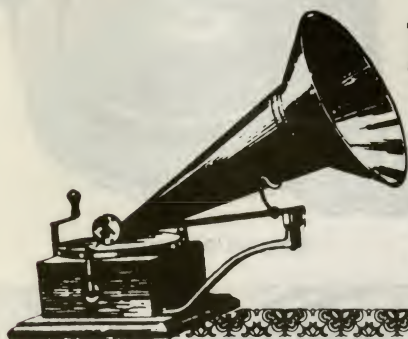
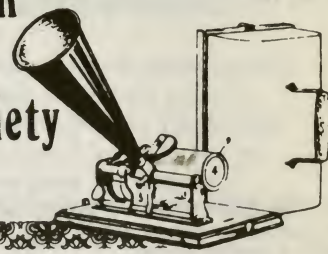


# The Hillandale News



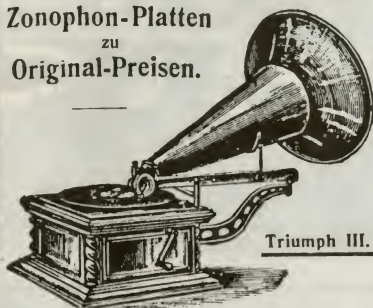
The official journal of  
**The City of London  
 Phonograph and  
 Gramophone Society**  
 Inaugurated 1919



No. 110

OCTOBER 1979


Zonophon-Platten  
 zu  
 Original-Preisen.



Triumph III.

## Triumph-Platten - Apparate.

Billigste Aufnahme- und Wiedergabe-Phonographen  
 mit Aufsehen erregenden Neuerungen  
 und verdoppelter Tonfülle.

D. R. G. M.  D. R. P. a.

Erstklassige Platten u. Records berühmter Künstler.

**Biedermann & Czarnikow**

Grossfabrikanten

BERLIN SW, Kreuzbergstr. 7.

Telegramm-Adresse „Indicator“.



Begründet 1884.



Vor dem Kopieren  
 unserer

**Triumph-Records**  
 wird gewarnt.

Simplex.

 Unsern soeben erschienenen Katalog versenden auf Wunsch an Händler vom Fach gratis und franko. 

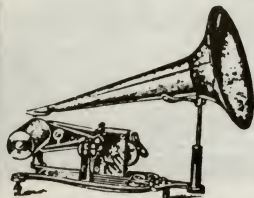
## Fritz Puppel, Phonographen-Metallwaren-Fabrik

Neuheiten in erstklassigen, billigen Auf-  
 nahme- und Wiedergabe-Phonographen  
 auf ornamentalen Grundplatten  
 auf Kästen, in Schatullén.

**„Geschützte Muster.“**

Massenfabrication aller Einzelteile, wie Trichter,  
 Membranen, Conusse etc.

Permanente Musterausstellung in der Fabrik.  
 Rixdorf-Berlin, Thomasstrasse 16.



„Neuheit Lyra“

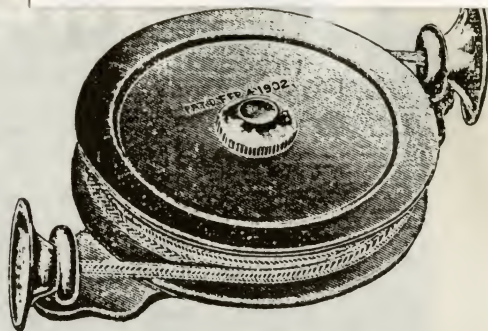


„Sirena Neuheit“



THE COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH COMPANY, 89, GREAT EASTERN STREET, E.C., are putting on the market a new winding attachment for Columbia graphophones. This is an ingenious device in which dealers in Columbia goods will be interested. We append below illustrations and particulars of same. The price is 6s.

These illustrations show an extremely simple and convenient winding attachment, which may be used for quickly winding the Columbia graphophone.

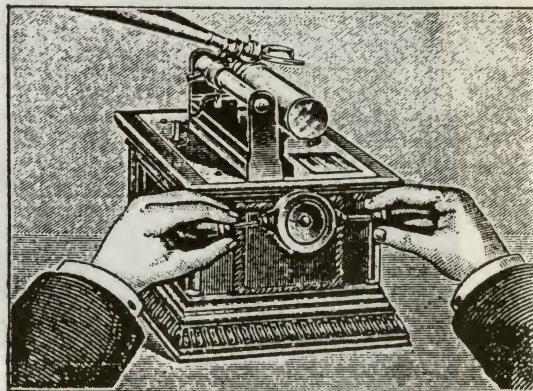


WINDING ATTACHMENT.

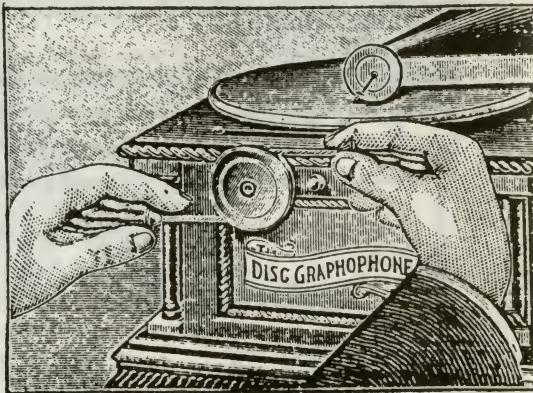
SHOWING ATTACHMENT APPLIED TO CYLINDER GRAPHOPHONE.

The motor is wound by simply pulling two strings, which operate a ratchet wheel.

This attachment is suitable for Types "AA," "AT," "AO," "AH," "AJ," and "AK." It is important that the type of machine for which attachment is ordered be correctly stated.



BORNAND FRERES, 16-17, DEVONSHIRE SQUARE, BISHOPSGATE STREET, E.C., are introducing phonographs and disc machines of Swiss manufacture. We have been so accustomed to having talking machines from America, Germany, and France, that it is quite an innovation to hear of Switzerland entering into competition in these goods. This firm have an immense reputation among musical box dealers, their goods not only being attractively finished and pleasing to the eye, but the internal construction is always of the highest order. The Puck Phonograph this season will have a serious rival in the Puck disc machine, which has been brought before our notice. This machine is delivered in a nicely polished imitation oak box, and will play seven inch records. We had the satisfaction of listening to several selections, and feel sure that if dealers were only to see a sample they will prepare for the great trade that these machines are sure to command during the coming season. The machine, trumpet, and other equipment are packed in a cardboard box, with sufficient space left to include a good selection of discs, and will be sold to the trade at a price that will enable dealers to retail them at half a guinea. We hope in our next issue to give further particulars of this marvellously cheap machine, together with illustrations.



SHOWING ATTACHMENT APPLIED TO DISC GRAPHOPHONE.

I must begin this month on an apologetic note; firstly, for the long-delayed appearance of the August issue, and secondly for the thinness of the present one. The reason for the latter is not lack of material, but the appalling increase in the cost of printing over the last year. This has been caused mainly, I understand, by frequent rises in the cost of paper; the problem for us now is that producing and distributing 'Hillandale' is costing more than our subscription income.

The Committee are looking at possible solutions to the problem: these include raising the subscription (which we are reluctant to do), reducing the frequency of issue to four per year, or reverting to a cheaper form of publication. None of these seems very attractive, but I hope that by the time of the A.G.M. in October we shall have come to some decision. I may add that we are very fortunate indeed in having a printer who is sympathetic to our cause and keeps our printing costs as low as is economically possible, while at the same time giving us a high standard of presentation.

There has not been time to compile a report of our meeting on October 1st, but I would like to record here our gratitude to Leonard Petts and E.M.I. for the hard work that must have gone into the preparation of his talk on the introduction of the G. & T. Red Label records, and the Company's generosity in providing a handsome two-colour printed programme, a reprint of the first Red Label Catalogue, a photostat of the first list of all (in Russian, of course) and a copy of their historical booklet, 'Playback'. With the exception of the latter, these were produced especially for the occasion, and were available only to those actually attending the meeting. They should rapidly become collectors' items in their own right — if you were not there, hard luck! (A full report of the meeting will appear in the next issue).

Illustrations: The German advertisements reproduced in this issue appeared originally in the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* in 1904. Again, these are taken from photostats kindly loaned by Dieter Hellauer of Munich.

### STOP PRESS:

Further to the apology above, this issue has been delayed even more than the previous one, and members' indulgence is craved while the Editor slaves over a hot (and unfamiliar) typewriter in an effort to speed up the process, reduce costs and get the December issue out in December!



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# Cavan O'Connor

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By JOHN MCKEOWN

Cavan O'Connor celebrated two important events this year - his 80th birthday and his 50th wedding anniversary, and we congratulate him on both counts.

He was born on 1st July, 1899 in Nottingham of Irish parents. In his youth he was apprenticed to a printer. In 1914 he attempted to join the Royal Navy by raising his age three years, but he was found out and rejected. However he was able to hoodwink the Army and joined the Royal Horse Artillery at the age of 15. He went with his regiment to France in 1915. Some months later he was wounded and returned to England just before his entire regiment was wiped out in the Battle of the Somme.

He was demobbed in 1919 and, like millions of others at the time, he could find no work, and so joined the long dole queues. Very occasionally he found work, singing in Working Men's Clubs in the North of England.

He then heard of a musical scholarship which he won, and this took him to the Royal College of Music in London. It was whilst he was a student there that he came to the attention of Sir Nigel Playfair, who was running his famous season at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, and sang in the greatest of all ventures at that venue, "The Beggar's Opera". This was followed by "The Duenna" and "Riverside Nights".

Cavan O'Connor's recording career started in the mid-twenties, just before electric recording (he remembers making some acoustic recordings). A friend introduced him to John Thorne who was at that time musical arranger for the Vocalian company (John Thorne himself was a singer and a prolific recording artist under various names). Cavan was given some small parts in a Gilbert & Sullivan series which Vocalian were doing at the time and he proved so successful in these that the Company offered him a contract at one hundred guineas a year.

This was the start of a recording career that was to last up to the present time and to include many labels and pseudonyms. The appended list will give some idea of the range of Cavan O'Connor's recording activities.

Quite recently I found a Hudson record of two Irish songs sung by a "Peter O'Flynn". I suspected this might be Cavan and sure enough it was he. He could not recall recording for the Hudson label and thought that they might be pressings from Filmophone masters (recorded in a church off the Edgware Road). Our researcher Frank Andrews has since confirmed that he was correct.

In 1929 Cavan married Rita Odoli whom he had met at the Royal College of Music where they were both students. Rita was the niece and ward of Maggie Teyte. When Dame Maggie (as she was to become later on) was first introduced to Cavan she bet her niece £10 that in two years she would change her mind about marrying him!

Cavan and Rita have three sons, Michael Garry and John. Garry has acted and written plays which have been produced and has reviewed theatre and films for "The Times" and "The Financial Times". He has recently written a biography of Dame Maggie Teyte which has been published by Victor Gollanz. This book is a must for all lovers of vocal art.

Between 1925 and 1935 as well as countless solo recordings, Cavan has recorded the vocal refrains with all the famous bands of the day including Jack Hylton, Ray Noble, Ambrose, Geraldo and Carroll Gibbons. It was in 1935 that he attained great and enduring fame, via the B.B.C. who conceived an idea for a weekly programme called "The Vagabond Lover" with an anonymous singer. The Programme was an instant and overwhelming success, and the anonymous vagabond was, of course, Cavan O'Connor. When the secret was revealed by a perceptive Radio critic, Cavan embarked on a Music Hall career and for nearly forty years has remained a "top of the bill". He has toured America and New Zealand.

Cavan has appeared in several films and the writer can recall seeing an extract from one of these some years ago when Ray Mackinder of the British Music Hall Society put on some film shows at the National Film Theatre.

Cavan is still in excellent voice and still accepts the occasional professional engagement. His latest record was issued in 1978 on the Rediffusion Gold Star label. On this disc he is accompanied by his wife Rita. Decca have two Ace of Clubs LPs currently available - "The Strolling Vagabond" on ACL.1097 (mainly Irish songs) and "Singing a Vagabond Song" on ACL.1272. The items on ACL.1097 are transfers of Decca 78's made mostly in the 1940s.

The Society was delighted to have Cavan and his charming wife as guests at our 60th Anniversary Dinner in May, when Cavan told the delightful story of the Dublin record factor who asked the manufacturers to send more records by Pat O'Brien has his customers preferred him to Cavan O'Connor!

Cavan has kindly consented to come along to our December meeting to present a selection of his records and we shall look forward with pleasure to meeting him again.



# LABELS AND PSEUDONYMS FEATURING CAVAN O'CONNOR

ACO	Harry Carlton
BROADCAST & BROADCAST TWELVE	Cavan O'Connor; Harry Carlton; Terence O'Brien.
COLUMBIA	Cavan O'Connor; Allan O'Sullivan
CROWN	Pat O'Dell
DECCA	Cavan O'Connor; Cliff Connolly; The Strolling Vagabond"; "The Vagabond Lover" Shaun Cassidy.
DOMINION	Patrick O'Moore.
EDISON BELL	Terence O'Neill
FILMOPHONE	Peter O'Flynn
H.M.V.	Vagabond Lover
HUDSON	Peter O'Flynn
IMPERIAL	Pat O'Dell
PARLOPHONE	Cavan O'Connor
PHONYCORD	Con Conway
REGAL	Allan O'Sullivan
REGAL-ZONOPHONE	Cavan O'Connor
STERNO	Pat O'Brien; Pat O'Dell; Earl Parry; Francesco Odoli (in Italian)
VICTORY	Pat Hugh
VOCALIAN	Cavan O'Connor



*Cavan and Mrs O'Connor at the  
C.L.P.G.S. Jubilee Dinner  
(Photo: R.Caton).*

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# The Sound of Mica

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BY JIM GOODALL

I recently had a surprise packet from the Spares Dept. of the C.L.P.G.S. The fact of not having ordered anything made it rather mysterious — not a bomb for *me*, surely! However, on opening the package, it failed to go off and I found a brand new 48mm mica diaphragm together with a letter from Barry Williamson asking me to pass on via 'Hillandale News' my evaluation of this product.

Well, having played around with soundboxes on and off all my life, my opinion is that, overall, mica diaphragms have the edge over the metal ones. The superiority of mica shows up particularly well in the H.M.V. No.4 soundbox which I have always held was the best soundbox ever to go on the market. My observations have shown that, provided the mica is of the right thickness and supported under the correct pressure between gaskets of the right constituency, it produces a better bass response and better tonal balance than metal. Furthermore, a mica diaphragm is more robust and not liable to become buckled or bent out of alignment. I have seen many soundboxes wrecked in this way.

At Barry's kind suggestion, I have found a home for the 'Mica from Heaven'. I used it for the restoration of an H.M.V. No.2 soundbox on which someone had overheated the wax seal so that it had spread across the mica, and the gaskets had perished completely. Having cleaned the wax off the mica, I noticed by the pitch of its ring that it was thicker than the new sample from the Spares Dept. (the higher the pitch, the thicker the mica). Having some spare pieces of the proper H.M.V. solid red gasket, I fitted the new and thinner diaphragm, with the result that this No.2 soundbox now gives a superb performance which is quite on a par with that of a No.4. Hitherto, I have noticed that the shortcoming of the No.2 box has been its shrill tone and lack of bass response. The evidence from this repair job seems to show that most of the diaphragms used on No.2 boxes were too thick to offer sufficient compliance, with the result that when the double bass appears, the needle just shudders in the groove or even jumps out onto the next groove and damages the record. Given a diaphragm of the right thickness, I feel the design of the No.2 was superior to that of the No.4 in that it is simpler, more robust, easy to adjust and completely reliable. I have one No.2 in my own collection; in it, I use a mica which I have made slightly thinner by paring off a very thin layer of mica, and the results are such that I often use this soundbox in preference to any other.

Finally, in connection with these findings, I have noticed in the days when micas could be bought at most main music dealers, that in a batch of half a dozen or so of the same size, they were not all of the same thickness, for the pitch of their ring varied. I do not know if the jig can be adjusted to produce varying thicknesses, but would suggest that in the event of their being produced again, these diaphragms be cut slightly thinner than average, for I have found that by using a thinner diaphragm, the production is much fuller and stronger. There is more bass, and there is enough compliance to enable the No.2 and even the 'Exhibition' soundbox to cope with any record and compete favourably with any later model. Excellent though the H.M.V. No.4s were, I feel that if their diaphragms had been just a shade thinner, they could have been even better.



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# People, Paper & Things

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BY GEORGE FROW

This time of year we are constabty reminded is the 'silly season', whatever that may mean. Certainly in the Northern Hemisphere thoughts are of outdoor activity rather than phonographs and gramophones.

Nevertheless a couple of things that have come through the letter-box can be reported, though the first would have suffered distortion had it come in the house that way, because it's a record. I am here indebted to my friend Mariano Gomes Montejano of Madrid for his kindness in sending it to me, thus drawing our attention to it. Called 'The Catalan Piano Tradition', it features recordings from early cylinders and discs by well-known Spanish composers and pianists. Around 75 years ago, a Senor Ruperto Regorosa Planas imported Edison equipment into Spain, and recorded visiting notables at his home near Barcelona. Many of the resulting cylinders survive and a number are here presented, played by Isaac Albeniz (1860-1909), Joaquin Malats (1872-1912), and Frank Marshall (1883-1959). Additionally there are recordings from early Odeon records of Enrique Granados (1867-1916) and of Alicia de Larrocha when she was a child prodigy of nine in 1932. Considering the age of the cylinders, these have transfered quite satisfactorily, and the tapes must have been heavily chopped about to exclude clicks and blemishes, although not surprisingly some still remain. For their age, the piano tone is remarkably good, and these recordings are pleasant in their primitiveness, as well as offering re-discovered and rare creators' versions of their own music and arrangements. (International Piano Archives Recording IPA 109, 17 St. Luke's Place, New York City 10014, U.S.A.). On the cover of this record is reproduced a picture of — presumably — the cylinders involved, all stacked on their sides in felt-lined boxes; very impressive and business-like too they look, but a sure way to deterioration unless closely watched. From experience with decaying cylinders, most of us would recommend they be stored vertically on pegs and kept clear of moisture-absorbing felt or baize, and in a dryish atmosphere.

Senor Montejano also sends a booklet prepared for Spanish children explaining the first century of recorded sound, and with notes on composers and their compositions. He also reports on finding an Edison Concert Phonograph (large cylinder) for himself in Spain, which is remarkable considering the strong Pathe distribution in western Europe radiating from Paris, and the weak Edison representation there which was just unable to stand up to the low prices of the local products. What is more, two other Concert phonographs have been acquired lately in Spain, which was out on a limb for Edison territory, although of course the Edison Company catered for Spanish speaking America. Apparently the Spanish companies Huygens y Acosta of Madrid, and Manual Moreno Cases of Barcelona recorded Concert cylinders in Spain, and are, Senor Montejano thinks, the only ones to do so, and perhaps the records attracted the machines.

Jean-Paul Agnard, [REDACTED] Mery-Seine, France, has shown me his version of the rolled aluminium horn with spun bell with which Columbia equipped many of their cylinder Graphophones; this is true to the original and is good value at £15. Enquiries to him please, and not to the Society.

The removal of the four 14½ft. wide stained glass windows showing the Nipper and Gramophone trade mark from the Victor buildings at Camden, New Jersey, broke some hearts of Gramophone zealots on the East Coast, but according to a recent copy of R.C.A.'s house magazine *Cosmopolitan*, the Dog and Trumpet has been introduced on R.C.A. products again, starting with 3,000 vans and 250 trucks for the first time since 1968. Nipper will become more prominent on all R.C.A. products in future, and may we hope that E.M.I. will revive him fully on the top half of their labels; too much lately has he been shrinking until one day



he will go altogether and all record marques replaced with E.M.I. Some readers may not be aware that there is a 25ft. 4 ton plastic Nipper on top of the R.T.A. building in Albany, N.Y. R.T.A. is a distributing company for R.C.A. I have a picture of this giant Nipper being cleaned for repainting, with one man standing on top of the head, while another sits on a cradle hanging by rope from one of its ears. This doggie carries an aircraft warning light on top of its head, which not even my dog does, and it likes to be different. Plastic is a notorious hater of sunlight, but the Albany Nipper has been there for 25 years and presumably has not split at the joints.

Several months ago I mentioned being called on to loan a phonograph for 'Pygmalion' and 'My Fair Lady', and it has now gone on an extensive U.K. tour in 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'. My wife and I went to see the play at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. The phonograph was there all right on the side of the stage behind a net curtain, in fact the whole stage area was surrounded by this transparent curtaining, behind which squatted an orchestra of three and the cast of two men went in and out to a couple of hat-stands and put on different hats, coats and wigs, at one point dressing as what the Victorians described as 'ladies of the demi-monde'. A girl dancer in a mouldy leotard and with a green face took the stage while the men were changing and presumably represented Degredation. What the phonograph had to do with it all was a little taxing, but an occasional tape simulated speech from it. We agreed that if we had just emerged from a lifetime in a jungle or desert and had never heard of Jekyll and Hyde, we wouldn't have understood the goings-on on the stage. The things we do for our machines, and as Jekyll and Hyde, give us Frederic March any day.

A misprint crept into my request in the August issue on behalf of D. P. Whistler, Fair Green, Longwater Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire, which made a nonsense of it. He wishes to borrow the carrier arm of a *Graphophone* AA, in order to have some reproductions made, and all interested should contact him.

Finally three people to whom we offer our congratulations; Allen and Judy Koenigsberg on the arrival of a fine son — a Combination Attachment which will greatly increase their pleasure — and good wishes to Frank Holland of the British Piano Museum on the award of an M.B.E. (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours.

## TECHNICAL SERVICE

Member Mike Field has very kindly offered to answer requests for advice on repairing and restoring machines: the questions and answers would be published in 'Hillandale', and we hope that they will be of interest and help to members generally. Letters should be addressed to D.M. Field, [REDACTED] Malvern Link, Worcs.

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## Report of the July Meeting

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At this meeting, we had the pleasure of welcoming Joe Pengelly of Plymouth. He has been seen and heard on numerous occasions on television and radio demonstrating the superb results he gets from cylinders played electrically.

Firstly, we heard a demonstration on tape of a tinfoil phonograph, followed by a transfer of a Lioret cylinder. Then we came to Joe's special equipment, based on an Amberola 1 mechanism with an electric pickup in place of the reproducer. A Blue Amberol was played (**Dawson, The Volunteer Organists**); the same cylinder was then heard on a Fireside with an unusually large horn, brought along for comparison by Douglas Fitzpatrick, of Sheringham. In the large hall, this sounded very subdued after the powerful tones of the electric machine, but gave good reproduction and would have sounded excellent in more domestic surroundings.

Among the other cylinders demonstrated on the Pengelly 'Special' were two-minute Indestructibles and a Henry Seymour celluloid cylinder taken from a wax Amberol. As a sort of aside, we also heard tape transcripts of some Victor 1.p. recordings of 1931-2; these had 142 grooves to the inch, and were pressed in a new plastic material. Part of the Beethoven Fifth was heard; this was the first recording on these discs to have been specifically recorded for 1.p., others being dubbed from 78s.

The results obtainable by playing Blue Amberols on the Pengelly system have to be heard to be believed; nothing that I can say would convey that amazing sound to those who were not present. Our thanks to Joe for a most interesting evening.

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## Report of the August Meeting

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For August, we were back to acoustic reproduction of cylinders, with a demonstration by Dave Roberts of a wide variety of reproducers on an almost as wide variety of machines. The story was told from the Edison Automatic up to the Diamond C, not forgetting other makes like Columbia, Pathe, Puck and Bettini. Ada Jones, Ben Davies, Ernest Pike and Peter Dawson were among the singers we heard, and the climax came when we heard the latter's 'The Trumpeter' played not in stereophony this time, but in triphony. Perhaps the most remarkable thing was the work that the Vice-Chairman had put into this programme. Apart from having a prepared programme for all members of the audience, Dave had carried the machines up from Surrey one by one on the train in preceding weeks — a truly Herculean task. We understand that a former Chairman took pity on him and provided motorised transport for the return journey.





*Some of the reproducers, and an Edison Gem, seen at the August meeting.  
Photo: Len Watts.*

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# I'll Never Say 'Never' Again...

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BY RAY PHILLIPS

Several years ago Nancy and I were visiting some historic houses in Virginia. In the gift shop of one of them were some very well made cast metal miniatures. One was a horn gramophone, so I bought it. It was made in Spain, and they are still available.

Actually, it is a pencil sharpener. There is a hole on the left side for the pencil. It is well detailed, although only three inches high. When you turn the crank the turntable revolves, and the tone arm actually swings from side to side. But the maker had gone too far! He obviously did not understand what the horn was for, because he had put a grille on the front of the cabinet. Well, of course, you and I know better than that. How ridiculous! These model makers! They have done it again! They can never leave well enough alone! They always have to improve on the original, and make something that never existed at all!

How superior I felt, right up until the time I got my catalogue for Sotheby's auction of September 27, 1976. As I turned the pages my gaze froze on one photograph and I realized I HAD DONE IT AGAIN! I had said that there never could be a certain type of phonograph, and there it was! I was wrong again! There was a photograph of a gramophone with a large horn and, I hate to admit it, a grille as well.

The explanation was that it was a Path, and the owner had a choice of routing the sound through the horn, or, by turning the tone-arm upside down, of removing the horn and routing the sound through the inside horn and the grille!

My only consolation is that Pathe machines defy all logic with their infinite and illogical variety *anyway*, and I highly resolve never to say 'never' again!

**Editor's Footnote:** *These pencil-sharpeners are marketed in the U.K. under the name 'Play Me'. As Ray Phillips says, the turntable revolves when the winder is turned — but, if the winder is turned clockwise, the turntable revolves anti-clockwise. An identical-looking plastic model is also around, made in Hong Kong; who is copying whom? A further point — a horn gramophone with a grille on the front was shown on Page 73 of 'Hillandale' for June 1978. The 'grille' in this case was simply a blind fret, and no more functional than on the pencil-sharpener. This, funnily enough, was sold by a certain other London auction house.*



*Cast-metal miniature Gramophone made in Spain. Lying in front of it are three standard size needles.*



*Pathephone with internal and external horn. (Photo: Sotheby's Belgravia).*



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# Victor Emerson~The First Man to Make Entertainment Cylinder Recordings For Sale in the U.S.

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A REPORT OF A REPORT – BY FRANK ANDREWS

By his own account, the first man in Britain to make and sell pre-recorded entertainment cylinders was J. L. Young, in 1893, the ex-manager of the Edison Phonograph and the Edison United Phonograph companies of London. However, the first entertainment recordings on sale in Britain had been the E.Berliner Gramophone 'plates' which had been made in Germany and had come to Britain, certainly, in 1891, but, probably, in 1890. J. L. Young was one of those who admitted to selling the Berliner Gramophone and 'plates' before 1893.

As far as I can ascertain, the German-made Berliner 'plates' were not on general sale in America, and although Emil Berliner lived in America he seems not to have gone into disc production there much before the end of 1893. Entertainment cylinder recordings had already been before the American public for a number of years.

So who was the first to offer pre-recorded entertainment cylinders to the Americans? Victor Emerson says he was, and that what follows is his account of how it all began. This he delivered to an audience as part of the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of the American Graphophone Company, in 1912, the company which manufactured the 'Columbia' products and for whom Emerson was the chief of recording. His speech, as reported, went:-

'The real birth of the musical record business took place in New Jersey. The promoters of the enterprise, in those early days, believed the real commercial value of the phonograph or graphophone lay in its commercial features. I know I was hired by a concern to take charge of the dictaphones they had out at that time, and I was asked by Mr Charles Cleaver to make a report upon the subject, and take a week to do it and not to be afraid to tell the truth about the situation. I thought that with a week's practice I would be able to tell the truth about it and make my report to Ernest Lippincott and Cheaver.

'It was an adverse one, and I know that I lost my job the next day.'

'I then went to work for the New Jersey Phonograph Company and, with my fair experience with the dictaphone, I thought that to keep my 15 dollars a week coming in I had better try to get them (his employers) started on musical features. I was very busy 'jollyng' capitalists for about a week and figured it would cost about 15 dollars to try the stunt.

'The Board of Directors consisted of Nicholas M. Butler, (now President of Columbia College), S.S. Batten, President of the First National Bank in Newark, N.J., and George Frelinghuysen. They held a Directors' Meeting and held that a 15 dollars risk was too great! I told them I would pay the 15 dollars if we lost. They asked me to put up the 15 dollars. I didn't have 15 dollars, but told them they could take it out of my pay if things went wrong! That was a sure bet because, If it went wrong, I'm sure I would have lost my job and I would have been in 15 dollars anyway!

'They finally consented and I set up ten machines on Market Street, beside the Prudential Building, which they were about to tear down at that time. Just as I had finished setting up the ten machines I heard the most lovely music playing out in the street. The tune was 'The Boulanger Patrol'. It was being played by a 'mud-gutter band' of four pieces. I asked the 'orchestra leader' to come up in my office as I wanted to talk business with him. He had, evidently, never talked with a real businessman before and was very much embarrassed, but he finally said that he did not want to do that kind of business as he was making money in

'the legitimate field' and he did not think it would be worth his while, (to make recordings), but I told him that we were 'sports', and he could play sitting down on chairs instead of kicking the 'bouquets' in the streets! And he finally said he would play for 3 dollars a day for four men.

'All phonograph men are economists — if they were not they would not be in this business and so I 'Jewed' him down to 50 cents and closed the contract!

'He played all day, and we made about 2,000 records. These cost us nothing because we got the 'blanks', on credit, from the Edison Works, and we never paid our bills — neither did anybody else — it was merely a habit at that time! I'm sure that the people who bought them from me never paid for them!

'To my knowledge, there never was a musical record sold before that time, and so we held many 'conflabs' and figured out what profits we had to make on those 2,000 records, considering the large investment of 3 dollars!

'As I said, they were about to tear down the Prudential Building and a man came over and said it would be a good scheme if I could exhibit a Phonograph over in the Prudential place. He was sure I would make some money out of it. I told him it was an expensive thing to do and he acknowledged it. But finally we rented the place at a cost of about 60 dollars.

"Now", he said, "What about records?"

'I told him we had some 'John Philip Sousa Band' records, that we had made at a very large expense, and that we could sell them at 2 dollars, meaning 2 dollars per dozen. And he said, "All right, here is 24 dollars for twelve."! Well we sold all those records at, practically, 2 dollars and now the great question that concerned us was how to stock them.

'I got the Manager to consent to give me 5 dollars of that 24 dollars and let me buy a cabinet. I went to a junk store and bought a second-hand kitchen closet. It had a nice, large, fat chop in it, which quite considerably increased the assets of the Company! At the same time gave us something to eat — if the worst came to the worst!

'The only other expense was 10 cents for chloride of lime; and we stocked those records. I thought it was fun to have a 'Grand Concert' up in my office, and when the stock got low I said to Mr Smith we had better make some more. He asked "How many have you got left?" and I said "Six." He said, "Well, gracious me, wait till we sell them all!"

'The next great artist we had was George W. Johnson, the composer of 'The Whistling Coon' and 'The Laughing Song', and I think that the phonograph companies have made more money on those two records than on any other two records in their catalogues. I contracted with Johnson to sing at 25 cents a song and kept him busy all day and all night. But the price of whiskey went up at about that time, as you will remember, and it was the same problem then as now, you must give a man sufficient money so that he can live and have the necessities of life. So George 'struck', and I had to bow to the yoke!

'Our next artist was J. Gaskin. He was the leader of the Manhattan Quartet. He, very fortunately, broke his contract just as we were perfecting our duplicating machine.

'I want to say, by way of diversion, that this duplicating machine was originally invented by Frank Capps. He used to go in a shop parlour, in Chicago, borrow a record, take it home and duplicate it, and would return the other record, but in another colour! That looked suspicious to us and we traced him up, and found him climbing telegraph poles near Pretoria, Illinois! We bought him out and started him manufacturing duplicating machines for us.

'But what I want to say about Gaskin is that he told me, one day, that he had a new quartet and that he was going to put it on the (records?) market and bust our business. Says



he, "The very name will do it!" And I asked, "What name?" and he said, "The Mozart Quartet". "Mozart, you know," he added, "was a great musical 'moke'."

'Well, gentlemen, from that beginning we ran into a business of probably 500,000 records per year in a short time, and I would have done a large and profitable business were it not for the fact that Mr Easton started in about that time and used to buy records from me and scooped up all my new customers with my own records. The only thing that kept us alive was that the Columbia Phonograph Company actually did pay its bills and, at that time, it was about the only company that did.'

This last paragraph gives us the time period to which Victor Emerson had been light-heartedly referring in his speech.

The American Graphophone Company, for which he was then Recording Superintendent, had been founded by Edward D. Easton on the 13th May 1887, according to the 25th Anniversary Celebration report. Two years afterwards, Easton had acquired sole and exclusive rights to Edison's Phonographs and Sumner-Tainter Graphophones in the States of Delaware, Maryland and the District of Columbia, and these he sold to another company, founded for the purpose of exploiting those rights, The Columbia Phonograph Company, of which he became President. (This company is not to be confused with the Columbia Phonograph Company, General, which was formed in 1894 as the Sole Sales Agents for the American Graphophone Company throughout the world.)

As the Columbia Phonograph Company was founded in 1889, Emerson must have been referring to the period from 1889 to, say, 1891, when the New Jersey Phonograph Company was one of the regional companies contracted to the North American Phonograph Company.



## REPAIRING WORM HOLES

BY P.W. TEMPLE

A great many talking machines have suffered at some time in their life from wood worm and so are now covered with worm holes. In cases where the surface polish is fairly good but is marred by the holes, instead of filling the holes and then repolishing, it may be a better solution to the problem to fill the holes with a suitably coloured wax. This wax can be made from a mixture of paraffin wax and beeswax. It can be coloured to a suitable colour to match the cabinet of the machine with the coloured waxes used in candle making. Pure paraffin wax and the colouring waxes can be bought from most large toy shops or craft shops.

It is not a particularly good idea to use melted down candles as they contain a stearin which makes the wax shrink (this is added to make the wax easier to remove from the mould in candle making) which means that the wax could fall out of the worm holes, if used to fill them.

To use the wax, small amounts of the hardened wax should be kneaded to a working consistency and then used to fill the worm holes.

It is quite a good idea to make up batches of different coloured waxes, one for oak cabinets, another for mahogany, etc.

One last point; the wax should be melted with the greatest care as it will ignite very easily. If it should catch fire whatever you do **DO NOT PUT WATER ON IT**, it is much better to have the pan lid near at hand with which to smother the flames.

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# Edison's Winter Home in Florida

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BY ALAN FORREST

When friends lent us their holiday house at Boca Raton, Florida, I realised that only the width of that state — a dash along Alligator Alley — separated us from Edison's winter home at Fort Myers. A circular tour was accordingly arranged, with something for each member of the family: Disney World at Kissimmee, Sarasota to visit friends and the Ringling Circus museum, and then on to Fort Myers.

For our tour of the Edison home we had a guide who must have been around for much of the time when Edison was around. His age was however no handicap but on the contrary the source of great knowledge and unbounded enthusiasm about his subject; we got a one hour forty minutes tour of the gardens, house, laboratory and new Museum, instead of the statutory hour. It covered aspects of Edison's work which I had not seen at Orange, New Jersey and provided a wealth of anecdotes about the great man which were new to me.

## Edison's first vacation

Seriously ill from overwork, Edison decided in autumn 1884 to take a vacation in Florida. After a series of adventures he arrived in March 1885 at Fort Myers, on the bamboo-lined banks of the Caloosahatchee River, then a sleepy, tropical village of 200 inhabitants. Taking an instant liking to the place, he bought (for \$2,750) a 14-acre waterfront estate. Thereafter came a speedy return to health and a long series of 'working vacations' in Fort Myers right up to his death.

## A prefabricated double house

He brought his second wife Mina to the existing small house on the estate for their honeymoon and by 1886 they were installed in a gracious pair of new houses, connected by a tiled colonnade. The houses are composed of sections made of clear spruce in Fairfield, Maine, and transported aboard four schooners to Fort Myers. They are believed to be the first prefabricated homes in the USA. Why two units? Firstly, Edison had a dislike of the smell of food cooking (it is surprising that he did not think of inventing an extractor!) and so he lived in one house and ate in the other. Secondly, for the first twenty years of their residence in Fort Myers, the place was accessible mainly by a boat which called only once a month (a journey of practically 24 hours from Arcadia through wild swampy snake and alligator country was also theoretically possible); therefore guests either had to return after a few hours or stay for an entire month. Edison felt that the relationship with his long-stay guests was better if they lived in one house (presumably with the cooking smells) and he in the other.

The home is as Mina Miller Edison left it when she willed it to the nation just before her death in 1947. The style is homely and comfortable. The feature which strikes the visitor is the series of fourteen foot wide porches round the ground floor rooms of each unit — an inspired idea, for they provide a cool atmosphere in the rooms and allow windows to be kept open even during tropical storms. The carbon filament bulbs Edison made in 1910 have been alight for an average of 12 hours a day since then; they appear to be indestructible but the drawback is that they are 12-watt, so that the chandelier of six lights only provides 72 watts!



### **Family and friends**

The estate is a testimonial to the happiness of Edison's relationships with family and friends. The house itself bears witness to his wife Mina's charming personality, but there is also a beautiful Memory Garden dedicated to her, presented by her son Charles.

Charles himself, who headed Edison industries and served as Governor of New Jersey and Secretary to the Navy under President Roosevelt, is represented by his office, which was removed intact from the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York City and placed in the Edison Museum.

Friendship Walk, which stretches about 200 yards from the road to the home, is composed entirely of stepping-stones donated by visiting friends, each one bearing a different name. His best friend was Henry Ford, with whom he was closely associated in the industrial world. Ford purchased an adjoining tract of land in 1916 and the gate between the two estates was always kept open. He presented Edison with a prototype model T Ford, one of three made in 1907, two years before they were put on the market. Edison became so attached to this car that he spurned all offers of new ones for Florida; accordingly Ford sent mechanics to modify and improve the car periodically, the last time being in 1927. The car is in the Museum and is brought occasionally to run in rallies. After Edison's death in 1931 Ford lost interest in Fort Myers and moved away. Harvey Firestone, who wintered on the Florida east coast, was a frequent visitor, and so was John Burroughs, a famous naturalist.

### **Edison the botanist**

The first contact of the visitor is with the beautiful tropical gardens, showing a relatively unknown side of Edison's activities. His interest in horticulture may have been his only indulgence outside his electrical and mechanical genius. This passion served the other two activities, notably in the use of carbonised bamboo filament in the early electric lamps and the search for better plant materials, as well as, much later, his long effort to obtain rubber from golden rod. Nevertheless the hobby was pursued for its own sake, Edison and his wife (as well as an expert gardener in their absence) tending the 6000 trees, plants and seedlings sent by friends all over the world. Edison and his friends also went on expeditions to the Florida swamps to bring back colourful orchids.

The gardens, today, almost one hundred years after Edison's occupation and in spite of several violent hurricanes, are a maze of strange and outlandish foliage, giant tulip trees, brilliant flowering vines, graceful palms, bamboos, ficus and many other exotic specimens. Visitors are shown the sausage tree (huge grey elongated fruit) from Africa and the fried egg tree (flowers like an egg, sunny-side up), as well as the dynamite tree from South America, the tomato-like fruit of which explodes violently, showering seeds within a radius of 400 feet. No visitor can miss the banyan tree, donated by Harvey Firestone as a three-foot seedling from India in 1927 and today having a huge number of trunks or aerial roots in a total circumference of 280 yards.

The underground electric cables installed by Edison for lighting the gardens in 1885 are still in use today. A feature of the gardens is the outdoor swimming pool built with his own Edison Portland cement and reinforced with bamboo instead of steel; eighty years after construction it still does not leak.

### **The laboratories**

Edison had a small laboratory next to his house, and a much larger one on the part of the

estate which is across a main road away from the house. The latter was built by the Edison Botanical Research Company (Edison, Ford and Firestone) in 1920, to find a new source of rubber. Ford paid the expenses, Edison did the research to make rubber from golden rod, while Firestone took the crude rubber to Ohio and made car tyres from it ( a set of which went onto Edison's model T Ford). The laboratory and office are exactly as Edison left them including chemicals and apparatus. The office contains the cot where he took his 'cat naps' and an internal horn phonograph with teeth marks on the wooden frame: biting the frame enabled Edison to 'hear' phonograph cylinders in spite of his deafness, vibrations of the recordings being transmitted through the teeth and jaw to the inner ear.

### **The Edison Museum**

The superb Edison Museum, dedicated by Charles Edison and completed in 1970, contains a comprehensive collection of Edison's inventions, as well as personal mementoes. The special collection of 1000 light bulbs contains the oldest electric lamp in existence, as well as the largest, made for an Edison anniversary.

The Museum is stuffed full of phonographs, ticker tapes, film projectors, a model of his film studio, the second moving picture film ever made, generators, storage batteries, telegraph equipment, Edison telephones and many other items. Showcases of newspaper extracts, documents and publications are of enormous interest.

The collection of 200 Edison phonographs includes half a dozen with the most beautiful flower-painted horns I have ever seen. Two stand in a place of honour: a silver cylinder phonograph and a gold-plated battery-operated one. (Can anyone tell me who formed this collection and how? The Museum did not respond to my question on this subject.) In a case are over 40 different Edison cylinder boxes and 20 cylinders in different sizes, colours and materials, as well as a number of discs, including his longplaying ones. Talking dolls are present, as well as a fine collection of cylinder and record catalogues.

Full marks to the estate, to the Museum and also to the shop which sells amongst the usual type of souvenirs (one pencil sharpener bears a resemblance to the competition — a tiny brass G + T dog model gramophone!) original Edison records and cylinders — unfortunately not very exciting ones ('When the old folks were young folks' or 'let's grow old together honey' type), but nevertheless it cannot be easy to maintain a supply.

### **1904 SMALL ADS. (Opposite page):**

The Editor's German is scanty, but the products on offer are gramophone needles, mica diaphragms, ornamental mouldings for cabinets in beech, oak or walnut and, apparently, a metallic stearate material for phonograph cylinders - perhaps a German speaking member could explain the top right-hand ad. for us?



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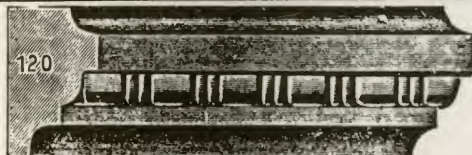
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